

Updating the interpretation of data in TPR

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Translation Studies and Linguistics have both become much more empirical in the last decades. This is a very welcome development, but observational and experimental studies only yield data that are meaningless by themselves: researchers need to provide an interpretation, to make sense out of such data. Cognitive Science has shown that some of our basic ideas and constructs about language, communication and translation—often expressed metaphorically—are either misleading or empirically false. We tend to think that such errors do not have an effect on our interpretation of experiment results, but some of the difficulties and misunderstandings in state-of-the-art TPR may be ascribed to such outdated assumptions and obsolete views on concepts that are basic for both Linguistics and TPR.

In this talk I will summarize some of these not-so-new insights on language that are challenging some deeply ingrained ideas reçues: Languages do not exist. Our minds know of no languages, but just Language, if at all. Bilingualism has paradoxical effects on cognition. Meaning can never be transferred from one language to another. Comprehension is an active process, not totally aligned with language command. Context is not out there, but only in our minds. Culture is in the eye of the beholder.